EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Presently there are approximately 190 Indians in Sierra Leone. Though it is learnt that some Indians, especially women and children have left the country, so far there is no record of any of them coming to India.

(c) The overall responsibility to ensure security of life and property of foreigners in Sierra Leone lies with the host government. Our Mission in Abidjan which is concurrently accredited to Sierra Leone is constantly monitoring the situation in that country through our Honorary Consul there and will do every thing possible to ensure the safety of Indian in Sierra Leone.

Purulia arms drop case

†2091. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of people together with the details of nationality of each sentenced in Purulia arms drop case;

(b) whether Government have decided to set some of them free;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the step Government is considering to take in regard to the remaining convicts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Six persons were sentenced to imprisonment for life in the Purulia arms drop case. Five were Latvian nationals of Russian origin and the sixth was a British national. During the course of the trial, the five Latvian nationals were granted Russian citizenship.

(b) and (c) The Russian leadership had at various levels raised the issue of pardon/clemency for the pilots. The family members of the crew had appealed for mercy. The State Duma of the Russian Federation (Lower House of the Russian Parliament) had adopted

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

a Statement on February 9, 2000 seeking mercy to allow the convicted pilots to return home.

Taking into consideration the strength of Indo-Russian relations, which are time tested and are being consolidated into a strategic partnership, as also the humanitarian dimensions of the problem, and after careful consideration and in pursuance of conferred under Article 72 of the Constitution of India, the President of India was pleased to remit on July 21, 2000 with immediate effect, the unexpired sentence of imprisonment of the five Russian pilots.

(d) in so far as the remaining convict is concerned, the law will take its own course.

Post in Indian Embassies/High Commissions/Consulate Generals earmarked for Deputation

2092. SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the posts in Indian Embassies/High Commissions/Consulate Generals in various countries earmarked for officers on deputation from Ministries other than the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) Ministry-wise break-up of such posts being held by officers on deputation from Ministries other than Ministry of External Affairs; and

(c) the details of such posts being held by the officers of External Affairs and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) The posts in Indian Embassies/High Commissions/Consulate Generals in various countries earmarked for officers on deputation from Ministries other than the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry-wise break of such posts being held by officers on deputation from Ministries other than Ministry of External Affairs are given in the exclosed statement (*see* below).

(c) Nil.